

Koi Joy – The pleasures of Water Gardening

Hopefully throughout the fall and winter you've kept your pond clean, maintained your filters and water quality to minimize the stress of rapid climate changes. Being alert during the transition to reduce any stress factors will be beneficial for the growth and development of your Koi during the summer months.

To help with the water quality, small but frequent water changes are recommended. At the Whaley house we do a 5% change twice a week. We believe this is more beneficial during the spring warm up than larger water changes every 3 to 4 weeks. Please do not forget the declorinator each time you do a water change regardless of how small. And remember to set the timer when leaving that hose in the pond.

Check your water temperature on a regular basis. As water temperature begins to remain steady over 55 degrees, start feeding slowly. And as the water temperature increases, you can increase the amount of food. This also is a really good time to perform regular water quality checks, paying particular interest to ammonia and nitrates. If you detect any problems stop feeding your fish and do more frequent water changes. When the water quality is back to normal resume your feeding schedule.

If there is any time of the year when you are most likely to have bacteria or parasite problems it is in the spring. Bacteria and parasites are always in the pond water and become active at different temperatures. The balance of your eco system naturally keeps things in check, but if the fish become stressed, the combination of their lowered immunity and the increase in bacterial and parasite activity increase the chances of your fish becoming ill. Watch for any fish that does not hang with the others. It is not a personality problem and he's not mad at one of the other fish. They separate when something is wrong. Watch for any flashing. This is a sign there is something wrong with the water quality that's irritating their skin. You'll recognize this as diving sideways or rubbing their bodies on things. Look for sores or injuries. When water temperatures are low, healing is slow, so keep a very close eye on any injury. Acting quickly and treating is better than waiting to see if they get better on their own. If you're unsure, don't know what to do or how to do it, contact your local Koi club for help.

By the time next month's column is out most of you will be battling the spring algae bloom, so we'll have some hints and suggestions.

Please email me with any questions you may have. Dale@DWhaley.com